

March 25, 2019

To the citizens of Portsmouth:

In light of recent events, I feel compelled to address the multiple inquiries regarding my departure.

Over the past few days I have been reflecting on the moment I was sworn in as Portsmouth's Chief of Police, in which I became the first African American female police chief in the Commonwealth of Virginia. I remember the excitement in the air and the beam of pride in the eyes of family members, coworkers, friends, citizens of Portsmouth, as well as state and city officials. As stated in my swearing-in speech, I had been advised numerous times that I had a difficult task ahead of me. I then assured you that I was up for the challenge.

Prior to accepting this position, I had been advised of the external strife that existed between the community and the police department as a result of several officer involved shootings and I was also aware of the public friction between city leaders. Nonetheless, I did not let that deter me from coming to Portsmouth. However, after a former officer was convicted for shooting a young black male, the internal strife to include racial tensions within the police department became blatantly apparent to me, as well. Having been a member of two other law enforcement agencies, I have never witnessed the degree of bias and acts of systemic racism, discriminatory practices and abuse of authority in all of my almost 30 year career in law enforcement and public safety. I am acutely aware of the differences in the officers' attitudes and demeanor; therefore, I was determined to change this culture. Some of these incidents are so inflammatory, I am reluctant to make this publically available out of concern for public safety; however, I am willing to share specific information with the appropriate governmental entity. The good news is that I can assure you that this was a small contingency of the police department as most of its members are passionate about their job as law enforcement officers and treat our citizens with respect and dignity while upholding their constitutional rights.

In this endeavor to change the culture, which was not easy, I was often met with continued resistance from some members of the Portsmouth Police Department. An effort was made to create transparency, accountability and have all members of the department embrace the principles of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing, as I did, while trying to ensure procedural justice for our citizen. My goal was to develop a highly ethical, high performing organization that embraces diversity and treats everyone with respect and dignity. I am elated to report that most officers embraced that same spirit. However, there was a few that resisted change, which was expected, as legitimate change is always difficult. As such, those officers were dealt with in accordance within the disciplinary policies of the Portsmouth Police Department. In spite of the opposition over the past three years, we experienced a lot of success.

Within the first four months of my arrival, I implemented a geographical policing style with an emphasis on officer and supervisor accountability, consistency, familiarity, along with building community trust and goodwill. Additionally, I established over 20 new

initiatives that focused on crime reduction, accountability, transparency, community engagement, building trust and legitimacy, officer safety and wellness, diversity, training, technology, and equipment.

Some accomplishments throughout my tenure included:

- Homicides decreased by 52% first year (2016)
- Violent crimes decreased by 7% second year (2017)
- Overall major crimes reduction of 8% third year (2018)
- Women and minority representation increased from 36% to 46% within 2 years (2016 – 2018)
- Minority representation increased to 31% (2019)
- Hired over 50 recruits within 1 year, which consisted of 74% women and minorities (2018)
- Lowered sworn vacancies from 45 to 10 within 10 month time-span

Some of my established community engagement initiatives included the following:

- Community Engagement Opportunity (CEO) “Walk and Talk” in the community
- Teens and Traffic Stops program
- Faiths Behind the Badge Coalition
- Young Adult Police Chief’s Commission (YAPCC)
- Re-instituted the Police Athletic League (PAL)
- 8 week PAL summer camp for youth – YAPCC paid internship
- Rapid Engagement of Support in the Event of Trauma (RESET) walks
- Police Explorer Program
- Partnership with Life Enrichment Center – Officers tutor for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> graders
- Department LBGTQ liaison

These initiatives could not have been accomplished without the unwavering support from members of my police department and the citizens of Portsmouth. The initiatives have allowed us to enhance safety in the city and engage, develop and mentor our youth.

I can assure you that I did not “quit” on the citizens of Portsmouth. My mother did not raise me to be a quitter. She raised me to be a strong woman. As such, my resignation was not tendered under my own volition. This was a forced resignation and our City Manager was the conduit. My dismissal was especially heart wrenching and remarkably surprising because most of you know that we had an extremely close professional relationship. She was viewed as a mentor and a mother figure to me. In fact, prior to me leaving for vacation, my last conversation with the City Manager via text was her asking me to get together soon to have dinner. I replied, “Let me know when.” While out of town, I received a meeting request from the City Manager and when I inquired as to what the meeting was in reference to, she did not reply. When I returned to the city, I attempted to contact the City Manager to no avail. It was highly unusual for the City Manager not to return my phone call. On Monday morning, I proceeded to the city

manager's office. We engaged in small talk as she inquired about my vacation. When we sat down, she began to read a scripted document that stated in part that I had lost the confidence of my department. I interrupted her in an attempt to get specific information, especially since we have had numerous conversations over the past three years about the actions of certain individuals within my department trying to get a vote of "no confidence" on me. She continued reading and then asked for my resignation. I continued to insist on more information but she continued to state that she could not say anything more. Obviously in shock and dismay, I continued to press for answers. She then stated that if I did not sign the pre-written letter of resignation, she would terminate me. I continued to press the issue saying that I had not been counseled or warned on any issue and that I could not believe she was doing this. She then stated that if I signed the letter that I would receive two months severance pay through May 17, 2019. After signing the letter under duress, she then stated that it was effective immediately. Citizens of Portsmouth, I ask you, if I had done anything to warrant my immediate dismissal, would I have been offered a severance?

As with any organization, there were officers in the department that did not like my style of leadership and did not want me to hold them accountable for their actions. Some quite frankly did not like taking direction from an African American female. Further, I would contend that there were some politically connected individuals that never had confidence in me in the first place. Several officers verified that there wasn't any type of survey done that would validate the aforementioned claim. However, I find comfort in knowing that some officers and civilian personnel are praising me for being an agent of change for this department. Members of the department are extremely distressed and disturbed over this matter.

Unfortunately, I cannot provide additional information on the reason for my sudden departure. However, based on experiences I have endured over the past few years, I can certainly conjecture and so can you. As previously stated, there are members of a highly influential fraternal organization that have tried to generate a vote of "no confidence" on me for the past 2+ years without success, as they have not been able to articulate valid reasons. Some of these individuals recently received discipline for policy violations. Furthermore, I have been advised by reliable sources within the department, that the only other chief they have generated a vote of "no confidence" on was a former black male chief. In fact, I was told that the former white male chief came in and turned this department upside down to include dismantling units and transferring personnel due to various allegations and they did not even attempt a vote of "no confidence" on him.

My goal was to make this a better city for all. Contrary to what some believe, I have served this city well over the past three years. My only request is that the City of Portsmouth provides a positive letter of recommendation for future employment and to extend my severance package to 6 months.

To this day, I truly believe God had a plan and purpose for the calling he placed on my life. The National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives' (NOBLE) National President, Chief Vera Bumpers, recently sent me the following scripture: *"Have*

*I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.” Joshua 1:9*  
Although I do not know what the future holds, I do know that I will leave with this organization with integrity, dignity, and pride.

I want to thank City Manager Dr. L. Pettis-Patton and the City of Portsmouth for giving me the opportunity to serve as your Chief of Police. I want to especially thank the members of the Portsmouth Police Department who supported me every step of this journey and the citizens of Portsmouth for their resilience and support.

As every chief knows when one accepts the position of Chief of Police, they are acutely aware that their time is limited due to foreseen or unforeseen circumstances. It is now time to move on in the next chapter of my professional career. It has been an honor to serve as your Chief of Police and I wish you much success.

Best Wishes,

Tonya D. Chapman